



## Tips to Help Churches Observe World AIDS Day

Globally, there are 37.2 million adults and 2.3 million children under 15 living with HIV. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 24.7 million adults and children are living with HIV.<sup>1</sup> The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization state that from 2004 to 2006, the number of people living with HIV increased in every region of the world. They noted the highest increases occurred in East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, AIDS is the leading cause of death for Black Women, including (African American) aged 25-34 years.<sup>3</sup>

World AIDS Day is one of the most successful observances to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, and is now recognized by a diverse range of constituents every year. This campaign can be used as a model in the faith community to strengthen the network of church outreach. Following is a list of activities your church should consider to help educate your congregation and slow the spread of HIV/AIDS in Black communities across this great nation.

1. Prepare a compassionate sermon about HIV/AIDS or choose one from the *Healing Begins Here: A Pastor's Guidebook for HIV/AIDS Ministry Through the Church*. (<http://healingbeginshere.org>)
2. Print this or a similar message in your church's bulletin: *The CME College of Bishops and the President of the Women's Missionary Council are challenging members to be "1 in a Million" to test for HIV. There are hundreds of free and low cost HIV testing facilities across the country. Visit [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org) and type in your zip code for a confidential center near you. You may also call 1-800-458-5231 to speak with a Health Information Specialist about HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD or TB prevention. Have the message come from your Episcopal Health Coordinator or regional missionary president.*
3. Collaborate with other denominations and the local health department in your area to host an HIV testing fair on or near World AIDS Day, December 1. Be sure to schedule with your local health department weeks in advance.
4. Have the youth and young adults make red ribbons to hand out on the Sunday before or after World AIDS Day. While making the ribbons, have a discussion about how the consequences of risky behavior can lead to HIV infection. Invite a local health counselor that you have screened in advance to facilitate in the discussion.
5. Plan a gospel concert and set-up health resource tables with materials to handout that you have had a chance to review in advance. Deliver HIV/AIDS awareness messages throughout the concert.
6. Hold prayer vigils and healing services for those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
7. Distribute copies of the Christian Index showing the College of Bishops and the Missionary Council President taking a public HIV test during the convocation.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unaids.org/wad2007/EPIupdate2006.htm\\_en/epi06](http://www.unaids.org/wad2007/EPIupdate2006.htm_en/epi06), pages 1-2

<sup>2</sup> AIDS Epidemic Update, UNAIDS/06.29E (English Original, Dec 2006) page 3

<sup>3</sup> CDC HIV/AIDS Fact Sheet, A Glance at the HIV/AIDS Epidemic, June 2007